

AMERICA'S CONTRIBUTION TO PHILIPPINE EDUCATION

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On a June day in 1901, three years after the Spaniards had surrendered to American troops in the Philippines, a public school was opened in a palm-thatched building on the island of Leyte. The teacher was American; the pupils were Filipinos, aged 7, 8, and 9, alert, apprehensive and curious. Most of them had never gone to school before, had never expected to go to school. Now they were pioneers in an experiment without parallel in history; these young Pacific islanders were embarking on a system of free education on the American plan and throughout their school years they were going to listen and study and recite in a language that was foreign to them. The black oilcloth from the blackboards did not roll - and the first words



to put the Philippines in contact with the other half of the world, particularly the United States; and to produce, in the next few generations of school children, the capacity for self-government under modern conditions.

The Filipinos were generally suspicious of the alien newcomers whose secularization of the schools was distrusted, whose habits were strange and whose language was not understood. Sporadic fighting was still going on in 1901 and they felt it was unpatriotic to send Filipino children to a school taught by Americans. The more favored classes looked askance at democratizing of the schools because, even though free schools had been nominally established in almost every town during the last decades of the Spanish occupation, the teachers nevertheless paid attention principally to the children of the upper classes and very few schools were open to the children of the country and village districts.

No Buildings Or Supplies

For the newly arrived Americans the problem of going into a foreign village and beginning school in English was a novel experience. Sent to isolated places, with no set course of study to follow, in some cases without even a school building and frequently without books or supplies, these pioneer teachers found many things to do that are not taught in any normal school or college of education. Brusque American methods frequently clashed with the more suave and easy going ways of the country. Only the sturdy optimism of the pioneer teachers and the universal desire of the Filipinos that their children might have a better chance in life than they had, made the teaching experiment a success. The language difficulties can readily be imagined.

"The inception of the plan was too bold to be anything but American," according to a committee of Philippine educators quoted by Dr. J.H. Hayden in "The Philippines, A Study in National Development."

But the teachers were intensely in earnest, the Filipino pupils had a keen desire for education and a marked intellectual capacity, and it was not long before order was brought out of chaos. Distrust changed to acceptance and acceptance to hearty cooperation. By trial and error it was soon found that rapid progress could be made, not by the translation method, but by having the Filipino pupils learn English much as the little American children learn to speak their own language.

American texts were adapted to use for Filipino children and it was not many years before texts were written by Filipinos themselves for use in the Philippine schools.

When the first Filipino pupils finished high school some of them went on to Normal schools and universities to study for the teaching profession. The number of American teachers was reduced as the proficiency of the Filipinos increased, and by 1940 there were only perhaps 80 Americans left in the Bureau of Education in comparison with some 40,000 Filipino teachers and over 2,000,000 pupils.

Agricultural Instruction Given

As agriculture is the basis of prosperity for all tropical countries, agricultural instruction held first rank in the vocational work which was taken by all pupils as a part of their schooling under the new system. Thousands of pupils, as members of agricultural clubs, did splendid work in the raising of farm animals and chickens. Vegetable markets were started in districts where fresh garden vegetables were formerly unprocurable. Beneficial results

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were felt both in the increase of family incomes and in the improvement of health due to the use of a more varied diet.

Agriculture was not the only vocation fostered by the English-speaking schools. A telegraph school was opened by the government and before long all of the telegraphic work was done by Filipinos. Similar progress was made in the teaching of navigation. When the Coast Guard fleet was established, practically all of the officers were Americans. In a surprisingly short time all of these vessels were manned by Filipino officers trained either in the service or in the Government Nautical School.

In the early days the public school system was roundly criticized for turning out too many clerks. However, when business firms learned that they could replace most of their western stenographic and clerical staffs with Filipinos trained in the Philippine School of Commerce there was a demand for more graduates trained along clerical lines.

The hat, shoe and embroidery industries were stimulated by vocational classes in these subjects. The teaching of embroidery for example resulted in the development of an export trade of more than \$4,000,000 annually out of what was formerly only a woman's pastime.

New trade schools were instituted in practically all of the provinces. Trained workers in woodworking, ironworking, machine-shop practice and automobile repair provided greatly needed skilled workers in the mechanical industries.

The increase in population from 7,000,000 to 17,000,000 indicates in a general way the results of health education.

Government Establishes Nurse Training School

The Philippine Medical School and a number of private medical schools furnished a competent staff of Filipino doctors. It was quite an innovation to have women take up the medical profession. It was an even greater innovation when the first training school for female nurses was established by the government. Very quickly, however, the new nurses proved their worth and now there is never a question raised as to whether nursing is a proper field of endeavor for Filipino women.

After the Japanese are driven out, progressive public education will be resumed in the Philippines. As a former Secretary of Public Instruction, President Sergio Osmena is well acquainted with the administrative problems; and having been trained himself in the public schools, he has full appreciation of the worth of the system to the Republic of the Philippines.

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